

A CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

JAMES VOSE, M.D.,

*Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians;
Senior Physician to the Liverpool Royal Infirmary;
Late President of the British Medical Association,
etc., etc.,*

AND

SIR THOMAS GLADSTONE, BART.,

OF FASQUE, N.B.,

ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, ESQ.,

OF COURTHEY, AND

ARCHIBALD KELSO, ESQ.,

OF LIVERPOOL,

(The Executors of the late George Grant, Esq.,)

TO WHICH ARE APPENDED LETTERS FROM

THOMAS WATSON, M.D., F.R.S.,

*President of the Royal College of Physicians,
Physician Extraordinary to H. M. the Queen,
etc., etc., etc.,*

AND

P. M. LATHAM, M.D.,

*Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians,
Physician Extraordinary to H. M. the Queen,
etc., etc., etc.,*

R40705

In July last, Dr. Vose was summoned by telegraph from Liverpool to Aberdeen, to visit the late Mr. George Grant, who had become indisposed while in the Highlands. Dr. Vose obeyed the summons, saw Mr. Grant at Aberdeen, took charge of him back to Liverpool, and then attended him for some time, subsequently. Shortly after Mr. Grant's decease, Mr. Robertson Gladstone, one of his executors, requested Dr. Vose to send in a note of what was due to him, for professional services;—this was done, and the following correspondence ensued.

LIVERPOOL,

JUNE, 1863.

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Liverpool, September, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR,

My attendance upon the late Mr. Grant, during the present year, amounts to two hundred and five guineas: being one hundred and eighty-six guineas for the journey to Aberdeen (372 miles), and nineteen guineas, for ordinary visits.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. VOSE.

ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, Esq.

Union Court,

3rd October, 1862.

MY DEAR DR. VOSE,

Your charge for going to Aberdeen for the late Mr. Grant is considered very heavy by the heirs and other parties concerned in the will, and I think it right to enclose to you a letter which Mr. Gladstone and I have received from our co-executor, Sir Thomas Gladstone on the subject, wishing as a friend to let you know what the opinion is. I have had named to me that Dr. Latham was summoned down here from London some years ago, and his charge was to have been one hundred guineas, but as the patient died almost immediately after his arrival he reduced the amount to fifty guineas.

Yours very truly,

ARCH: KELSO.

COPY.]

Fasque, October 1, 1862.

MY DEAR SIRS,

I am a good deal surprised at the amount of Dr. Vose's charge for his visit to the late Mr. Grant at Aberdeen, and as one of his executors I feel it to be my duty to state to you what the system of charge is at Edinburgh, as stated to me by Professor Miller, in 1852, in these words: "As to the railway tariff, some time ago an arrangement, somewhat to the following effect, was come to as to distant visits: 1, When occupying the day only, £25. 2, When night included as well, £30." In 1855 I had occasion to summon Professor Miller, by telegraph, to Fasque. The distance is 135½. He was absent one night and the greater part of two days, and received £30. I presume that Edinburgh stands at least as high as Liverpool as regards the medical profession, and therefore I am of opinion that, as Dr. Vose was absent two days and two nights, £60 would be a liberal remuneration for the special visit; but as there is a charge of nineteen guineas for ordinary visits, I should recommend that £100 be paid to him in full of his account.

I am, truly yours,

T. GLADSTONE.

ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, Esq.

AR^D KELSO, Esq.*Liverpool, October 8, 1862.*

MY DEAR SIR,

Upon my return home, after a short absence, I find your note of the third instant.

In England, physicians are not guided by Edinburgh, as an authority in professional matters, but by London.

There—as you will find upon referring to any of the leading Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians, with whom you may be acquainted—we are entitled to charge, for journeys, at the rate of *not less* than two-thirds of a guinea per mile, when railways can be used, and of a guinea per mile when recourse must be had to post roads. If you will glance at the memorandum which I forwarded to the executors of the late Mr. Grant, you will perceive that I did not charge the journey to Aberdeen at the rate of two-thirds of a guinea per mile, but only at the rate of half a guinea a mile—And this I did, in consideration of having been employed as his physician, for some years past, by the deceased gentleman.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

J. VOSE.

A. KELSO, Esq.

Kirkwood,

October 23, 1862.

MY DEAR DR. VOSE,

Your favor of the 8th was forwarded to me at this place some days ago, and in replying to it I beg to refer to Sir Thomas Gladstone's further letter to his co-executors (copy of which you have enclosed) on the subject of your charge.

You are doubtless correct in what you say of the scale adopted by London physicians in charging for visits made to the country, and I have not therefore

applied for information in corroboration of your statement. I believe, however, that it is only in rare instances this scale is adhered to, and unquestionably the length of time the visit may occupy and other circumstances, as well as the distance, should be taken into consideration.

In the case of Mr. Grant you were absent from Liverpool, I think, two days, and even at your reduced rate of half-a-guinea a mile the sum you have demanded would represent a practice equal to about £36,000 a year, less what might be considered as applicable to the expenses and inconveniences of the journey.

Having given very full consideration to the matter, Mr. Gladstone and I both concur in what Sir Thomas Gladstone states, and believing the case to be one in which you would wish to bring down the charge to the minimum, we will be glad to find that you adopt our views.

I am, my dear Dr. Vose,

Yours truly,

ARCH^d KELSO.

DR. VOSE, M.D.,

Gambier Terrace.

COPY.]

Fasque,

October 20, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have read Dr. Vose's letter to Mr. Kelso of the 8th. The great saving in time and expence brought about by railway travelling has rendered necessary a large reduction in the charges made by medical men for

special visits at a distance, and I have been informed that Dr. Latham went from London to Liverpool to visit a patient, and accepted £50 or guineas for his services.

I consider the Edinburgh scale a very liberal one ; but I recommend that one hundred guineas be offered to Dr. Vose, in full of his demand, which will be eighty-one guineas for his visit to his old friend and patient Mr. Grant.

I remain, very truly yours,

T. GLADSTONE.

ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, Esq.

ARCH^D KELSO, Esq.

Gambier Terrace, November 3, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR,

If upon referring to the authority, which I indicated to you in my note of the eighth of October—a step which should be taken, in justice to me as well as to themselves—the heirs of Mr. Grant find that the fees claimed for the journey to Aberdeen are incorrect, I need scarcely say that I shall be only too glad to have an opportunity afforded me of rectifying the mistake. If, however, it be found that they are correct, then they can be paid or not according to the feelings which may have most weight among the heirs—for the fees are merely a debt of honor. As a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London, I make no *demand* for professional services.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

A. KELSO, Esq.

J. VOSE.

Union Court,

20th November, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR,

On my return to Liverpool Mr. Gladstone forwarded your note to me of the 3rd instant to his brother Sir Thomas Gladstone, who, in reply, has written to us to the effect of which the enclosed is a copy.

We regret to differ from you in this matter, and must say that we take Sir Thomas' view of it.

I am, my dear Sir,

Yours truly,

ARCH^d KELSO.

Dr. Vose, M.D.

COPY.]

Fasque,

November 18th, 1862.

MY DEAR SIRS,

After reading Dr. Vose's letter of the 3rd to Mr. Kelso, I cannot help expressing to you my surprise that he should continue to claim, tho' he does not actually "demand," the very large sum of 186 guineas for a journey to Aberdeen, which only occupied two days, and which was rather in the nature of travelling companionship than an occasion requiring great medical skill. Dr. Vose was applied to, as the friend and regular medical attendant of the late Mr. Grant, whose nephew was ignorant of the high scales of charge (*sic*) to which Dr. Vose refers, or he would not have asked for his attendance. I cannot admit that London and Liverpool are at all parallel, or that their medical men are so

any more than are barristers who belong respectively to the two places, and whose rates of remuneration are so very different. Even were they parallel, I should demur to the extreme application of the scale in this case, as operating with hardship upon Mr. Grant's heir. When we consider the immense saving in time and expense that railway travelling has effected, as compared with posting, the reduction of one-third or one-half of the old charge is quite out of proportion to the saving; confers undue advantage on the medical man, and, in my opinion, is, as it strikes me, barely creditable to such members of the profession as attempt to act upon it. I cannot doubt that Dr. Vose will reconsider his charge, and hesitate to take a course that would tend to discourage the public from obtaining the aid of medical men at a distance, and is at variance with the system of Edinburgh, and frequently that of London also.

I remain, my dear Sirs,

Very truly yours,

T. GLADSTONE.

ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, Esq.

AR^D KELSO, Esq.

P.S.—I cannot see that being a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians entitles a country practitioner to charge the London fees.

Liverpool, May 20th, 1863.

DEAR SIR,

Mr. Kelso wrote to you on the 20th November last: to that communication we believe there has been no reply or acknowledgment.

As the duties of the executors of the late Mr. Grant, in reference to Mr. H. E. Gordon, are about to terminate, we lately addressed that gentleman on the subject of the unsettled state of your account, of which we now enclose a copy, as also of Mr. H. E. Gordon's answer.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

For SIR THOMAS GLADSTONE, Bt. and SELF,
ROBERTSON GLADSTONE,
ARCHD KELSO.

Dr. Vose, M.D.

COPY.]

Liverpool,

May 15th, 1863.

DEAR SIR,

You have until recently been kept advised of what was passing with Dr. Vose, regarding the sum named by that gentleman for his services in proceeding to Aberdeen to accompany your late uncle, Mr. Grant, to Liverpool. But, on the 20th November last, Mr. Kelso addressed a few lines, enclosing copy of a letter from Sir Thomas Gladstone to Dr. Vose, urging the sufficiency of the amount offered, namely one hundred pounds, in payment in full of the services rendered by Dr. Vose, both in proceeding to Aberdeen and also for professional attendance at Mr. Grant's residence in Gambier Terrace. To the communication in question, the executors have not been favoured with an acknowledgement. It is needless for us to state to you, that as Mr. Grant's executors, without having any beneficial interest whatever in the matter, we can have no personal

feeling or object to serve; our desire is, to do that alone which is fair and equitable; precisely, in point of fact, as we believe Mr. Grant himself would have acted had the settlement been one occurring in his life time. We may remark that the sum of one hundred pounds was arrived at from the result of inquiry in several quarters, where similar cases had occurred of services rendered at a distance from the place of residence, by provincial practitioners, and we were guided thereby in the offer made. The period, as you know, is now close at hand, when you will be of age, as residuary legatee, and when our duties as executors, in so far as you are concerned, will come to an end. But in order that you may have no unpleasantness in respect of any unsettled matters handed over to you, and that all claims due by Mr. Grant's estate may be liquidated by the proper authorities—the executors,—we now recommend you to agree that we should tender the sum of one hundred and twenty guineas to Dr. Vose, in full discharge and payment of his professional services for the journey to Aberdeen and the attendance upon Mr. Grant in Liverpool.

Let us know by a few lines whether this suggestion does or does not coincide with your view as to what is liberal, and just, and fair to Dr. Vose.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours very truly,

For SIR THOMAS GLADSTONE, Bt. and SELF,
ROBERTSON GLADSTONE,
ARCHD KELLO.

H. E. GORDON, Esq.

COPY.]

*Christ Church,
Oxford, May 18th, 1863.*

DEAR SIRs,

I have to thank you for your letter of the 15th inst., and in reply beg to express my entire concurrence in your recommendation that the sum of one hundred and seventy guineas (*sic*) should be tendered to Dr. Vose, in final discharge of his claim against the estate of my late uncle.

I consider that sum to be a just and liberal remuneration for the services rendered by Dr. Vose.

I am, dear Sirs,

Yours very truly,

HENRY EVANS GORDON.

SIR THOMAS GLADSTONE, Bart.,
ROBERTSON GLADSTONE, Esq.,
ARCH. KELSO, Esq.,

Exors- of the late George Grant, Esq.

Liverpool,

May 22nd, 1863.

Dr. Vose begs to inform Sir Thomas Gladstone, Bart., Mr. Robertson Gladstone, and Mr. A. Kelso—in reply to their communication of the twentieth instant—that, as his notes of September, October, and November, 1862, contain as explicit a statement as he is able to give of his claim against the estate of the late Mr. George Grant, for professional services, he has really nothing more to say upon the subject.

The Executors of the late George Grant, Esq.

*Liverpool,**27th May, 1863.*

DEAR SIR,

We have to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the 22nd inst., and it is with extreme regret we observe that you do not accept the amount offered to you in discharge of your claim for attendance on the late Mr. Grant. Had he lived, we feel satisfied he would have taken exception to the sum named by you, and as his executors we cannot conscientiously debit our accounts with it.

We may state that in compliance with your wish, we some time ago obtained information as to the scale of charges for visits at a distance, adopted by the Royal College of Physicians, and whilst we found that the general usage among the “Metropolitan Physicians and Surgeons (as distinct from general practitioners or family medical attendants)” is to make their charge as you had stated; we understood at same time that it represented a maximum charge—that the public did not generally recognise it—that men of eminence in the profession were in the constant habit of accepting much lower remuneration—(we ourselves know of a case of fifty guineas being received by one of the first physicians in London for coming down to Liverpool,) and, finally, that gentlemen practising in the provinces, where the ordinary fees are greatly below those given in London, were paid proportionably for journies to the country.

We may further add, that we have not relied solely on our own judgment in this matter, but considered it our duty to consult several of Mr. Grant's personal friends, and they, in every instance, supported our views.

Under these circumstances we are reluctantly compelled to close our accounts without introducing your claim in them.

We are, dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

For SIR THOMAS GLADSTONE and SELF,
ROBERTSON GLADSTONE,
ARCHD KELLO.

Dr. VOSE, M.D.

Liverpool,

May 29th, 1863.

Dr. Vose begs to acknowledge the receipt of a letter from Sir Thomas Gladstone, Bart., Mr. Robertson Gladstone, and Mr. A. Kelso, dated the 27th inst., in which they intimate their repudiation of his claim for professional services against the estate of the late Mr. George Grant.

Dr. Vose has merely to remark, with reference to the conduct which Mr. Grant's executors have thought proper to pursue in this transaction, that his claim is only for a rate of remuneration which he has been in the habit of requiring, and of receiving without question, for journeys to Southampton, Birmingham, Manchester, and other places—and that members of the medical profession, now practising in Liverpool, have received similar, indeed higher, rates of remuneration for distant journeys, than Dr. Vose claims for the visit to Aberdeen.

The Executors of the late George Grant, Esq.

A P P E N D I X.

16, *Henrietta Street, Cavendish Square, W.*

June 18, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR,

I have read the printed correspondence submitted to me, at your desire, by Dr. Risdon Bennett.

Assuming that the honorarium expected by you for the distant visit did not exceed what is customary in the profession out of London, but in England, I do not hesitate to say that your share of the correspondence in question has been strictly correct in principle—temperate, forbearing, and dignified in tone. Upon the other portion of it I do not care to comment.

For at least thirty years it has been the habit with London physicians to look for, and to obtain, two thirds of a guinea per mile, for every professional visit into the country, performed by railroad.

These terms were settled by the leading physicians and surgeons here, after the fullest consideration. It was obviously requisite that some general rule should be adopted, to govern and render uniform our practice, and to the best of my knowledge and belief the rule has been, and is observed by all the “men of eminence” among us.

The fees thus settled are undoubtedly large. I can say for myself however, and I believe that I might safely affirm for others, that sudden summonses, on these terms, to distant patients, have been felt generally as serious trials, I had almost said as nuisances. The temptation of the large remuneration is strong—but its receipt scarcely compensates the great and inevitable inconvenience—and the possible, even probable injury to the physician—which such visits involve. His unexpected absence disappoints and brings distress to some of his London patients, and is the occasion of offence, and sometimes¹ of alienation, to others. The confusion and trouble consequent upon the derangement of his existing engagements are very great, and are not soon or easily rectified. I say nothing of the fatigue and the risks of the journey itself, though these are neither imaginary or slight. Several medical men have been hurt when proceeding on such errands—and it is notorious that one eminent physician has lost his life—by accidents on the railroad. So that the remuneration though large in amount, is not, in my judgment, excessive, and I feel sure that the physicians in London, whose services are most in request, will not consent to undertake long journies into the country, if such journies imply any risk of subsequent uncertainty or haggling about the usual honorarium. Fortunately for us, the question of “a large reduction,” which one of your correspondents affirms to be “necessary,” rests with ourselves.

After all, the matter, to my mind, is a very simple one. The patient, or the friend who acts on his behalf, is bound to do one of two things : either to ascertain

beforehand the terms on which the desired visit will be made, and to accept or decline the visit accordingly—or else having neglected to obtain this information, he is bound in honour to discharge, *in full*, the pecuniary return which is customary for such a visit.

Believe me to be,

My dear Sir,

Faithfully yours,

Dr. Vose.

THOS WATSON.

P.S.—Your communication was marked “private;” nevertheless, as I found that in your correspondents’ letters the name of my friend Dr. Latham was more than once taken in vain, I thought myself warranted in shewing it to him. He permits me to enclose herewith a note, which he has written to me on the subject.

I may add that although the fee sent to Dr. Latham on the special occasion to which he refers, was 100 guineas—he has to my certain knowledge, received 150 for a professional journey to Liverpool.

36, Grosvenor Street, June 15, 1863.

MY DEAR WATSON,

I have read the correspondence which you sent to me last night. Therein, I find, the executors of Mr. Grant appeal to me and my conduct as a physician, on a certain specified occasion, to justify themselves in withholding from Dr. Vose, what does appear to me, his fair professional remuneration.

Executor No. 1, says in a letter, October 3, 1862, "I have had named to me that Dr. Latham was summoned down here from London some years ago, and his charge was to have been one hundred guineas, but as the patient died almost immediately after his arrival he reduced the amount to fifty guineas."

Executor No. 2 says in a letter, October 20, 1862, "I have been informed that Dr. Latham went from London to Liverpool to visit a patient and accepted £50 or guineas for his services."

And finally Executors No. 1, 2, and 3 say conjointly, in a letter May 27, 1863, "We ourselves know of a case of fifty guineas being received by one of the first physicians in London for coming down to Liverpool." From the context it appears that the physician whom they do the honor of thus designating is myself.

Now, as a matter of fact or even of fair inference, there is not a word of truth in any or all of these statements put together. It is remarkable that in five minutes I should be able to lay my hand upon notes written at the time (15 years ago) shewing positively that what is stated did not occur and even could not have occurred.

On Wednesday, February 23, 1848, I was summoned down to Liverpool by electric telegraph. I went by railway and arrived at midnight, and was taken by Dr. Formby and the late Mr. Bickersteth to see a fine handsome young man in the extreme agony of Hydrophobia. He died at six o'clock the next morning in my presence. I returned to London as soon as I could.

On turning to the memoranda of my professional business at that time, I find that I did a good day's work

before I started for Livarpool on the Wednesday, and was in London again time enough to do no bad day's work on the Thursday. But, what of the fee? Certainly no "*charge*" was made by me—I doubt whether I ever made a charge by way of previous agreement in my life. It was impossible that I should have done so on this occasion—for I was summoned by telegraph. So that whatever was its amount, it could not possibly be in abatement of the original demand. Well! what was the fee? I did not return with it in my pocket; but when the family had recovered from the awful shock they had experienced, they sent me one hundred guineas—so the matter stands recorded in my book of Professional Receipts for 1848.

Thanks to two or three documents written at the time and luckily preserved, I escape the imputation of that spurious liberality which the executors would hold up for imitation—and I escape too all suspicion of shabbily undervaluing the services of physicians, and denying the right of Dr. Vose to the just remuneration which he claims.

Always, my dear Watson,

Yours affectionately,

P. M. LATHAM.

